



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1400 So. 19th
Bozeman, MT 59718

July 23, 1998

TO: Governor's Office, Julie Lapeyre, Room 204, State Capitol, POB 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801
Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Room 106, POB 201704, Helena, MT 59620
Dept. Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, POB 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Director's Office
Wildlife Division
Design & Construction Bureau
Lands Section
Legal Unit
FWP Commissioners

MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, POB 201202 Helena, MT 59620-1202
MT State Parks Association, POB 699, Billings, MT 59103
MT State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., POB 201800, Helena, MT 59620
James Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, POB 1184, Helena, MT 59624
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, POB 595, Helena, MT 59624
George Ochenski, POB 689, Helena, MT 59624
Gallatin County Commissioners, Gallatin County Courthouse, 311 W. Main, Bozeman, MT 59715
Jerry DiMarco, POB 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771
Wildlife Federation, POB 1175, Helena, MT 59624
Wayne Hurst, POB 728, Libby, MT 59923
Glen Hockett, 745 Doane Road, Bozeman, MT 59715
Jack Atcheson, State Land Coalition, 3210 Ottawa St., Butte, MT 59701
Ira Holt, 548 Cielo Vista, Hamilton, MT 59840
Jim Richards, POB 508, White Sulphur Springs, MT 59645
Kathy Johnson, Dept. of State Lands, POB 201601, Helena, MT 59620
Ohir School District, Big Sky, MT 59716

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for FWP's proposal to permit a septic/drainfield easement to Ophir School, located in Section 17, south of Big Sky. The acreage requested for this easement is between one and two acres and is adjacent to the school and will accommodate immediate and future school expansion needs. The proposed action is consistent with the direction FWP is taking with the surplus and trade of this parcel of land.

The Draft EA may be viewed at or obtained upon request from FWP at the Region 3 Headquarters in Bozeman (994-4042). The public comment period will end at 5:00 p.m., August 23, 1998. Written comments can be sent to: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Septic Easement, 1400 So. 19th, Bozeman, MT 59718.

Sincerely,

Stephen L. Lewis
Regional Supervisor

enc.

Gallatin

DRAFT

MEPA/NEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of Proposed State Action Septic/Drainfield Easement
2. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) deeded property
3. Name of Project Ophir School Septic/Drainfield Easement
4. Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency)

Project proposed to FWP, 1400 South 19th, Bozeman, MT 59718
phone (406) 994-4042

Ophir School District
Big Sky, MT
5. If Applicable:

Estimated Construction/Commencement Date Summer 1998

Estimated Completion Date Summer, 1998

Current Status of Project Design (% complete) 0%
6. Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township)

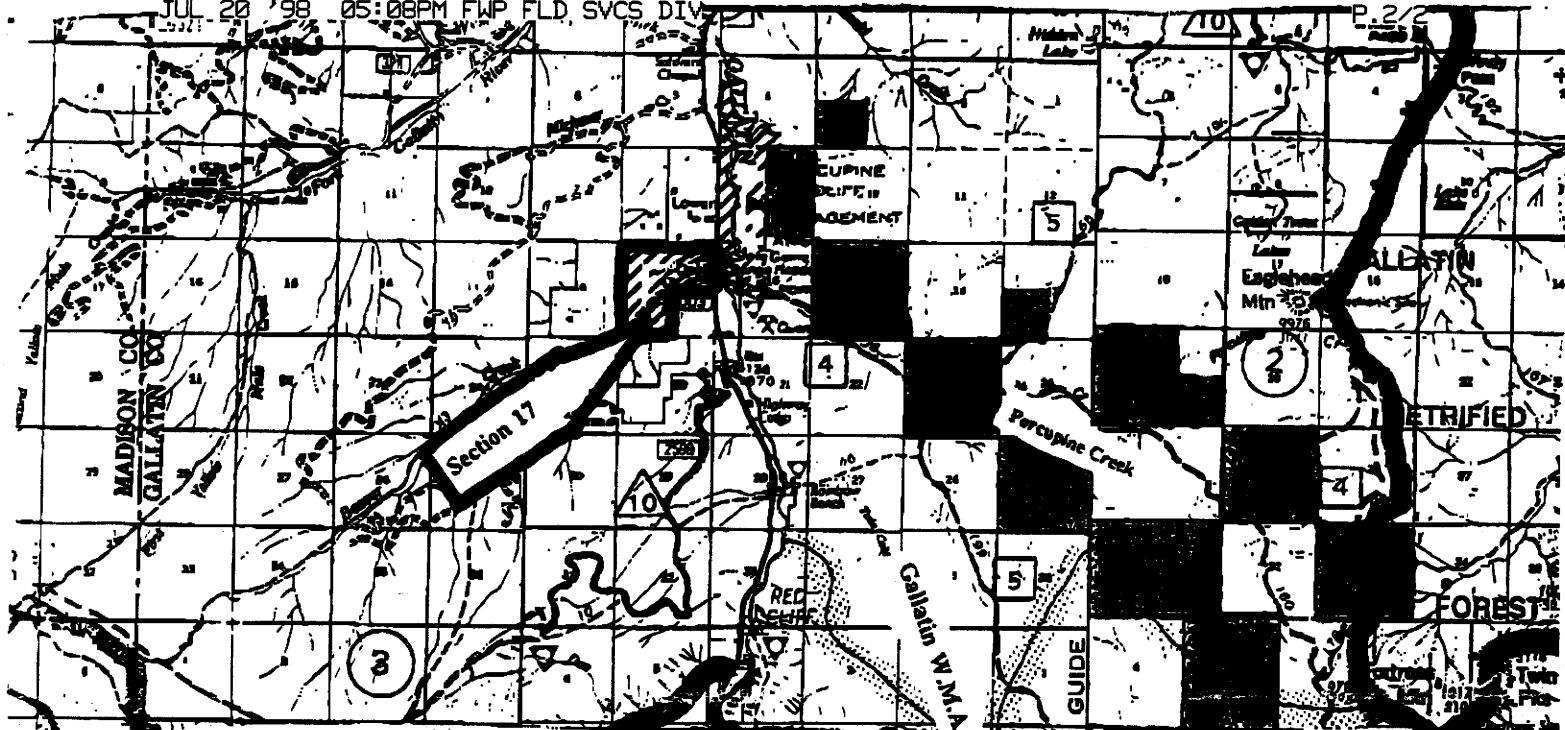
Gallatin County, A Five Acre Tract of land located in the NE1/4, Section 17, Township 7 South, Range 4 East.
7. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

(a) Developed: residential <u>0</u> acres industrial <u>0</u> acres	(d) Floodplain <u>0</u> acres
(b) Open Space/Woodlands/ Recreation <u>1-2</u> acres	(e) Productive: irrigated cropland <u>0</u> acres dry cropland <u>0</u> acres forestry <u>0</u> acres rangeland <u>1-2</u> acres other <u>0</u> acres
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas <u>0</u> acres	

8. **Map/site plan: attach an original 8 ½" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.**

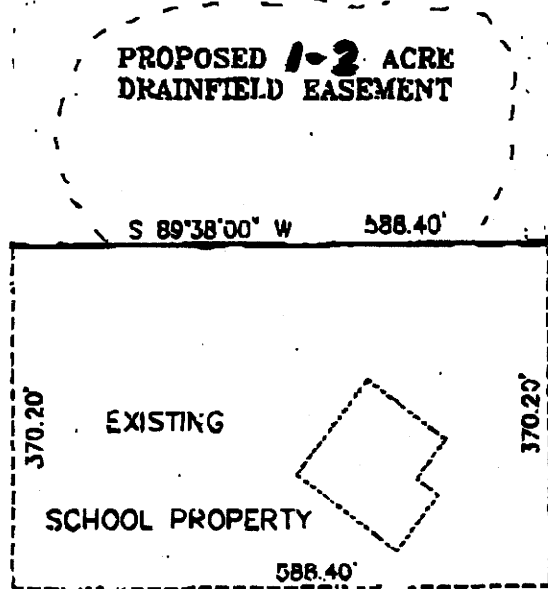
See Attached.

Rev. 3/93



OPHIR SCHOOL - BIG SKY, MONTANA

PROPOSED DRAINFIELD EASEMENT AREA



RIGHT-OF-WAY

US HIGHWAY 191

BASIS OF BEARINGS: NORTH LINE OF EXISTING SCHOOL PROPERTY ASSUMED TO BEAR S 89°38'00" W

9. Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action.

The Ophir School District requests a 1-2 acre septic/drainfield easement on FWP land to accommodate immediate and future school needs. FWP proposes to consider recommending this action because, aside from the initial excavation, long term the site will remain relatively unchanged. Although the proposed septic/drainfield easement is of no direct benefit to FWP or its objectives, the proposed action is consistent with the direction FWP is taking with the surplus and trade of this parcel of land known as Section 17. An EA has been completed on the surplusing of Section 17 and a request for proposal was initiated with one proposal tentatively accepted pending further negotiations. The cost of the easement would be \$2,500.00 to \$5000.00 depending upon final acreage.

10. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
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(b) Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
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(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
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11. List of Agencies Consulted During Preparation of the EA:

Mark Smith
Department of Environmental Quality, Helena, Mt,

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant		
► a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X	X		YES	
► c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other _____		X				

* include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Under the easement terms, top soil would be stockpiled and replaced as the top covering following excavation and the finished surface will be restored to substantially the same condition as existed prior to excavation, including revegetation.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant		
► a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (also see 13 (c))		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. ♦For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a)		X				
f. Other _____		X				

* include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- ✱ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- ✓ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

3. <u>WATER</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant		
► a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X	X		YES	
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X	X		YES	
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X	X		YES	
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X	X		YES	
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ♦♦For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c)		X				
m. ♦For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a)		X				
n. Other: _____		X				

* include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Under the terms of the easement, the septic system will be constructed and maintained in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. The design and approval for the septic/drainfield must be conducted by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The DEQ will conduct a detailed non-degradation analysis to assure the design will meet Montana's non-degradation laws.

- ✱ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

4. <u>VEGETATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X	X		YES	
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X	X		YES	
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		YES	
f. ♦♦For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other: _____		X				

* include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Vegetation Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Under the terms of the easement, top soil will be stockpiled and replaced following excavation and the finished surface will be restored to substantially the same condition as existed prior to excavation, including revegetation of any disturbed surface area.

Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

► 5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u>	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. ♦♦For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see degradation)		X				
i. ♦For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d)		X				
j. Other: _____		X				

* include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Fish/Wildlife Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed)

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u>	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X	X			
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other: _____		X				

* include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Noise/Electrical Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*There will be a temporary increase in noise levels during construction. When construction is complete noise levels will revert back to what they were prior to construction.

- ⚙ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other: _____		X				

* include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant		
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X	X		YES	
d. ♦For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		X				
e. Other: _____		X				

* include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Risk/Health Hazards (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*Under the terms of the easement, the septic system will be constructed and maintained in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. The design and approval for the septic/drainfield must be conducted by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality(DEQ). The DEQ will conduct a detailed non-degradation analysis to assure the design will meet Montana's non-degradation laws.

♦ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

♦ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

♦♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts. Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u>	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				
f. Other: _____		X				

* include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluation.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Community Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u>	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X	X			
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X	X			
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased used of any energy source?		X				
▶ e. Define projected revenue sources		X				
▶ f. Define projected maintenance costs.		X				
g. Other: _____		X				

* include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluation.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Public Services/Taxes/Utilities (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

*This easement is being proposed to accommodate current and future school expansion needs.

- ☆ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown im has not or can not be evaluated.
- ▶ Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ◆ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ◆◆ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

▶ 11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
▶c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)		X				
d. ♦For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c)		X				
e. Other: _____		X				

* include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluation.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Aesthetics/Recreation (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant		
▶a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. ♦♦For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a)		X				
e. Other: _____		X				

* include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluation.

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Cultural/Historical Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- * Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- ♦ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- ♦♦ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT*				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown*	None	Minor*	Potentially Significant		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. ♦For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e)		X				
g. ♦♦For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		X				

* include an attachment with a narrative explanation describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

☆

Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

▶

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

◆

Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

◆◆

Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

2. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

No action is the only alternative to the proposed action. Because Ophir School is surrounded by FWP land, the no action alternative would provide Ophir School with no economically feasible alternative to handle their septic needs while FWP owned the property. However, FWP is in the process of using Section 17 and its value to trade for land in the Taylor Fork drainage. In FWP's request for proposal a provision was made to provide the opportunity for Ophir School to obtain the additional (20 acres) land it foresees needing to accommodate future school expansion. If the land trade is accomplished Ophir School would then, through the no action alternative, obtain additional lands it needs including the parcel under discussion in this document.

3. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

The septic system will be constructed and maintained in compliance with all applicable state laws and regulations. During excavation, topsoil excavated from the area will be stock piled for replacement on the site, large rocks and excess material will be removed from the site and the finished surface will be restored to substantially the same condition as existed prior to the beginning of operations. This includes revegetation and weed control. In addition, it is recognized that trees and their roots are a problem with septic field maintenance, however sagebrush is a brush species that will be allowed to re-occupy the site following construction.

4. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? YES / NO If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this document an EA is the appropriate level of analysis. The proposed action is of minor consequence which does not contribute to a cumulative environmental impact, does not set a precedent, and is compatible with the existing and natural environmental character of the site.

5. Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

This EA and the associated 30 day public comment period constitutes the public involvement for this project. Legal notices have been placed in the Bozeman Daily Chronicle, Big Sky Weekly and the Lone Peak Lookout. This is appropriate due to the minor scope and effect of the proposed action.

6. Duration of comment period if any:

The comment period for this EA will run for 30 days, from July 23, 1998 through August 23, 1998. It is expected that the FWP Commission will review and act on this proposal in August or September, 1998.

7. Name, title, address and phone number of the Person(s) Responsible for Preparing the EA:

Kurt L. Alt, Montana FWP, 1400 South 19th, Bozeman, MT, 59715; phone (406) 994-4042

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed easement will accommodate immediate and future school expansion needs and is consistent with the direction FWP is taking with the surplus and trade of Section 17. However, granting an easement at this time might actually hamper FWP's direction, as stated in the Section 17 EA, i.e. to treat the property as a whole and not parcel out any further rights and to dispose of the property as a whole. In short, if our neighbors obtain everything they want without having to acquire the rights outright, what incentive do they have in helping the effort to use this property's value to consolidate public lands in the Taylor Fork drainage, i.e. who would then be interested in providing the value and public support to use these lands to consolidate the Taylor Fork lands?